United Nations S/PV.7006

Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

Provisional

7006th meeting
Monday, 22 July 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. DeLaurentis	(United States of America)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Mr. Bliss
	Azerbaijan	Mr. Musayev
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	France	Mr. Bertoux
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Morocco	Mr. Loulichki
	Pakistan	Mr. Masood Khan
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Kim Sook
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungirehe
	Togo	Mr. Kadangha-Bariki
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Shearman

Agenda

The situation in Burundi

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13-40059 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Burundi

The President: Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Burundi to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office in Burundi, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Paul Seger, Permanent Representative of Switzerland and Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Onanga-Anyanga.

Mr. Onanga-Anyanga (*spoke in French*): It is a great privilege for me to take the floor today on behalf of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to inform the Security Council of the implementation of the mid-term mandate of the United Nations Office in Burundi (BNUB), in accordance with the relevant provisions of resolution 2090 (2013), of 13 February 2013, in particular paragraph 13.

Allow me to convey to the Council my warmest congratulations for its sustained interest and forthright support for the efforts of the Organization, alongside the Government and people of Burundi, aimed at peace, development and national reconciliation.

I left Bujumbura following the holding, on 15 and 16 July, of the first sectoral conference organized by the Government in order to ensure effective follow-up to the Conference of Development Partners, held in Geneva on 29 and 30 October 2012. It is now more essential than ever to implement the promises made at that important meeting with respect to the second generation strategic framework for growth and poverty reduction, which guides the efforts of the Government.

That is so because Burundi is at a crossroads. It is both urgent and essential that the many advances made to bring the country out of its monstrous cycle of violence be converted from the basic management of violent upheavals into a profound national ownership of principles that are capable of promoting institutional transformation based on the rule of law and democratic values.

However, there are still enormous challenges on the path towards achieving the lofty goals that the people of Burundi and their authorities have set. At the outset, I would like to echo the appeal made by the Secretary-General for continued, multilateral support for economic recovery in Burundi. Helping Burundi to overcome the current economic problems that threaten to undermine the gains of a still-fragile stability requires taking part in the dynamic set in motion by the Security Council and following through on the peacebuilding process in the country in a holistic manner, as reflected by the criteria and indicators known as the benchmarks — in this case the benchmark pertaining to economic and social development — so as to make the dividends of peace, without which stability could be called into question, even more tangible.

The Secretary-General of course wishes to underscore that the primary responsibility lies with Burundians themselves, particularly through bold reforms and uncompromising governance. However, in the light of the many burdens that might impede growth and the emergence of a more effective economy that is more strongly linked to the East African Community, Burundi should receive essential support from its development partners in order to better strengthen its foundations and more effectively deploy its potential. The priority areas of energy, infrastructure, youth employment and agriculture should be developed, including through foreign direct investment, as the levels in the latter area remain far too low.

It is therefore in a spirit of mutually sustained commitment that I would like to present the following oral report on the situation in Burundi, which I have the honour to deliver following the publication of the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/36).

(*spoke in English*)

I am pleased to report that we have seen significant advances in terms of political dialogue since my most recent briefing to the Security Council (see S/PV.6909). As indicated then, from 11 to 13 March, BNUB

organized a workshop on electoral lessons learned with all Burundian political parties and actors, with the aim of helping to prepare the way ahead to the elections in 2015 by drawing lessons from the 2010 electoral process. The country's First Vice-President addressed the opening session of the workshop, which was attended by the Home Affairs Minister and other senior Government officials, representatives of all political parties, political actors who played a key role during the 2010 elections, and a range of senior Government officials and eminent persons, such as former Presidents. In one particular development, several opposition politicians who had remained in exile abroad following their boycott of the 2010 elections returned to Burundi to participate in the workshop.

It is worth stressing that, for the first time since 2010, all Burundian political actors came together to discuss their country's political future. Discussions during the three days were open, frank and constructive. Despite diverging views on several issues, participants agreed on a number of key principles going forward, as documented in the elements of a road map that emerged as the workshop's immediate outcome. Such principles included, inter alia, the need for inclusive political dialogue, the creation of a security environment conducive to the holding of free and peaceful elections, and the freedom of all political parties and actors to carry out their activities. The Home Affairs Ministry assumed responsibility for moving the process forward in an inclusive manner, and is to be congratulated for the constructive approach it has taken towards that aspect of dialogue.

As the first in a series of follow-up activities envisaged to move the preparations forward, the Government, with the support of the United Nations, organized a workshop from 22 to 25 May in the northern town of Kayanza, to discuss possible revisions to the electoral code, which was one of the elements that the March seminar had agreed to discuss. That workshop was again a success, and ended with broad agreement on the provisions of the electoral code that should be proposed to lawmakers for revision. Recommendations included the combination of presidential, legislative and communal elections; the distribution of tally sheets to political party agents at polling stations; and, most important, an agreement on the use of a single-ballot system, which had been a long-standing and divisive matter in Burundi. While some of the participants lamented a lack of preparation, they mostly appreciated the Government's initiative and the degree of openness that was shown by the inclusive list of invitees and the way the discussions were managed.

In our views, the implementation of the conclusions reached in Kayanza would represent a major step forward on the path to organizing free, fair and transparent elections. It is encouraging that, on various occasions, the President of the Republic reaffirmed his Government's commitment to ensuring that those recommendations be endorsed through the established legislative process when revising Burundi's electoral law in the coming months. Another crucial element, as key political party leaders emphasized during a meeting I held with them on 7 June, is a dedicated discussion on the establishment of a political environment that is conducive to the elections. The Government and BNUB have begun preparations for an inclusive meeting, to be held by September, that would specifically focus on this key issue.

I wish to emphasize that the return of key political figures to Burundi marks significant progress and is an encouraging sign of the increasing willingness of all political actors to collaborate in the interest of preparing for peaceful, free and fair elections in 2015. The returning politicians have since resumed their activities, with some political parties having already been able to make progress in terms of reaching out to their members in different parts of the country.

Such major advances on political dialogue have played a key role in reducing restrictions of political space, which have had the negative impact of curtailing the ability of political parties and actors to freely conduct their day-to-day activities. Yet, there is more to be done, since the activities of some members of the Imbonerakure — the youth league of the ruling party, the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD) — and overzealous local authorities continue to raise concerns. On numerous occasions during the reporting period, members of the Imbonerakure have harassed citizens and committed crimes — often, it is alleged, for political reasons.

We welcome the recent statements by the President of the ruling party and the President of the Imbonerakure, echoed by Cabinet members, in which they all emphasized that the CNDD-FDD and the Government did not endorse violent acts and called on the courts to prosecute violations in accordance with

the law. Leaders of other political parties have similarly encouraged their youth to refrain from violence. Given the country's violent history, we strongly urge all stakeholders to ensure that youth wings of political parties perform their activities peacefully and do not become a source of intimidation and, at times, actual danger to the population, including those who may be politically active, thus affecting negatively the political environment ahead of the 2015 elections. BNUB has intensified contacts with youth-group leaders to that end, and is planning to facilitate a meeting among them later this year, to assist in reinforcing peaceful approaches ahead of the 2015 elections.

The questions of land and the handling of disputes by the Commission Nationale des terres et autres biens (CNTB) relating to land and other assets unlawfully seized during the 1972 crisis have also been the subject of controversial discussion in Burundi during the first six months of this year. In some cases, the implementation of the Commission's decisions has elicited public, and at times violent, responses.

The issue of land and other assets is one of the most sensitive in the Burundian context and does not lend itself to easy solutions. Burundi is a landlocked country with one of the highest population densities in the world. In view of the divisive nature of this matter, and the risk of its opportunistic exploitation for political gain, including along ethnic lines, BNUB has called on all stakeholders to handle it with great care, in the spirit of the Arusha Accords, with a view to furthering justice, reconciliation, social cohesion and peace. We have therefore been encouraged to see the beginnings of a broader and more open discussion concerning the handling of land disputes in general, notably with a workshop chaired by President Nkurunziza on 24 June, which underlined the need for the CNTB to be guided by the principles of the Arusha Accords, while promoting justice and reconciliation.

With regard to benchmark II, concerning security and stability, overall, Burundi continued to enjoy a commendable level of security and stability. However, occasional clashes among Government forces and armed groups continued during the previous reporting period, including cross-border incursions from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with armed groups claiming responsibility for some of the attacks. As such incidents show, the ongoing instability in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to adversely impact Burundi. In a bid to help stem regional instability, Burundi has actively participated in regional and international efforts to strengthen peace consolidation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including through the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region and, most recently, through its active support to the Kampala process and the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Ms. Mary Robinson. Burundi has also maintained its laudable commitment to peace in Somalia through its significant contribution to the African Union Mission in Somalia, an engagement that the international community continues to appreciate strongly.

BNUB has continued to support the Government's efforts to professionalize and enhance the capacity of the national defence and security services, together with bilateral partners, including through the training of trainers on human rights and the prevention of gender-based violence, and through the marking and registration of weapons. On 28 May, Burundi took a step forward in the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons when the First Vice-President launched a second civilian-disarmament campaign, which will now be carried out with support from the United Nations and other partners.

With regard to benchmark III, concerning transitional justice, the transitional justice mechanisms foreseen by the Arusha Accords have yet to materialize. In his address to the nation on the occasion of Burundi's Independence Day, the President reaffirmed his Government's commitment to establishing a truth and reconciliation commission, noting that a draft law to that effect was before the Parliament and preparatory work was well advanced. In anticipation of the discussion of the draft law in Parliament, BNUB continued its activities with regard to raising awareness among national stakeholders as to international standards and best practices, notably by organizing a workshop for parliamentarians on the topic. Those efforts will continue to assist in the adoption of a law that is in conformity with international norms and national expectations.

No other process is as challenging as revisiting and owning the Burundian past. Yet, as hard and painful a path as that is, it remains vital to rebuilding the nation so that it can at last live free of fear, identity-conflict and impunity.

On benchmark 4, concerning governance, Burundi must be commended for its efforts to strengthen governance and the accountability of institutions. BNUB has been encouraging the Government of Burundi to press ahead with the implementation of the National Strategy of Good Governance and the Fight against Corruption, especially given the current efforts to work with donor partners on the follow-up to the commitments made at last year's partners conference in Geneva. Building on the positive developments reported last year, we have been able to note sustained improvement in the business environment and an ongoing reform process in the economic sector.

However, Burundi currently finds itself in an extremely difficult fiscal position. After three strong years of revenue growth, driven by the important work of Burundi's Office Burundais des Revenues, collected revenues in Burundi showed a marked decline in the period from February to May 2013. The country now appears likely to miss its 2013 revenue targets by a very substantial margin, threatening development outcomes and currency exchange. If not properly handled, that, in turn, could pose a serious threat to the hard-won yet still fragile stability.

A recent mission to Burundi by the International Monetary Fund identified a number of urgent alterations in fiscal policy that the country must pursue in order to balance its books. It will be critical for Burundi's leaders to take the painful steps necessary to ensure that the situation is rectified and revenue growth resumes.

On benchmark 5, concerning the rule of law, following the adoption of the sectorial strategy of the Ministry of Justice in 2011, BNUB continued to work closely with the Ministry of Justice and other relevant partners on the planning of an inclusive and open conference, the Etats-Généraux de la Justice, which is now planned for August 2013, after lengthy and difficult consultations. The judicial system as a whole still faces considerable challenges, as evidenced, for example, by the continuing gaps in the promotion of magistrates. It is hoped that the Etats-Généraux will help define the way forward in addressing the challenges in the justice sector with inputs from all relevant stakeholders. In a positive development, on 3 April a new criminal code was signed into law by the President, marking significant improvements in procedures in a number of important areas and enhancing oversight and accountability.

On benchmark 6, concerning human rights, the picture regarding the overall human rights situation during the first six months of this year is mixed. There has been a great deal of improvement, with persistent challenges. We have noted far fewer cases of killings that may have been politically motivated than in the past. In the first six months of 2013, BNUB documented 20 cases of extrajudicial executions. It needs to be emphasized, however, that a large number of those grave violations were associated with a single event, on 12 March, in the commune of Businde, in Kayanza province. Seven followers of a self-proclaimed prophetess, Eusebie Ngendakumana, were killed after a violent confrontation with the police. Eleven cases of torture and 80 cases of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment also occurred. Those figures, regrettably, mark an increase over the comparative period of the previous year. It must be noted that the excessive and inappropriate use of force by State security agents, mostly the police, appears to have been the cause of the majority of the cases of human rights violations that have been documented since the beginning of this year.

The Government has attributed the Businde incident to a lack of adequate training of the police with regard to crowd control and managing public demonstrations. It is worth noting that the police indeed seem to have started adopting a more cautious approach when dealing with similar incidents. It is imperative to now build on those advances so as to prevent further tragedies such as the incident on 12 March and to ensure that the freedom of religion and the freedom of assembly are respected while public order is upheld in accordance with the relevant legal provisions.

Efforts continued aimed at improving judicial follow-up to grave human rights violations, in a somewhat encouraging trend that began in 2012. Continued efforts will therefore need to be exerted to ensure that all perpetrators of crimes are duly prosecuted and sentenced, with a view to ending impunity.

The promulgation of the new press law on 4 June, after much controversial debate, has proved to be a highly divisive issue. Preoccupied by the risks of a decline in the freedom of the press and democratic space, the Secretary-General and a variety of bilateral and international partners, as well as local and international civil society organizations, called on the Government to uphold the freedom of expression. Among the concerns are provisions that broaden the

conditions under which journalists can be forced to reveal their sources and give disproportionate fines and other penalties for certain press offences. It is therefore reassuring that the Government of Burundi has since indicated its intention to apply the law leniently and to ensure that the freedom of the press continues to be a feature of the vibrant democracy Burundi aspires to be. We remain confident that the same attitude will be observed during the review and adoption of two further laws, on public meetings and demonstrations, and on non-profit organizations, with a view to protecting freedom of association and expression.

On benchmark 8, concerning socioeconomic development, overall Burundi continues to struggle with high rates of extreme poverty. Food security and nutrition remain major challenges, and most Burundians continue to face a daily struggle to make ends meet. Projections for 2013 indicate a slightly increased growth rate of 5.3 per cent, which is, however, insufficient to significantly reduce the poverty level, given the continuing high rates of population growth. On 27 January, the central market of Bujumbura burned down completely, profoundly affecting the economic and social life of the city and the country as a whole. The incident has negatively affected local merchants, farmers, transport workers and other citizens, exacerbating an already difficult economic situation for many.

Income generation also continued to be a major challenge for those Burundians who returned from the Mtabila refugee camp in Tanzania at the end of 2012, mostly due to the lack of land for agriculture and related land conflicts, despite the reintegration support provided by the United Nations and other partners. Burundi remains host to more than 50,000 refugees, mostly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the majority of whom are women and children. Almost 80,000 people continue to be internally displaced in Burundi.

Despite many advances made at the national level and the commendable efforts undertaken by the Government, the private sector and citizens themselves, Burundi remains in need of strong support from its partners in order to overcome the numerous challenges it faces on the socioeconomic development front. In that regard, a key area of focus during the first half of this year was to ensure effective follow-up to the commitments made by international partners at the October 2012 Geneva Conference. As I mentioned earlier, the Government successfully organized a first sectoral follow-up conference, which took place in Bujumbura from 15 to 16 July. A second conference, focused on governance and energy, is being planned for October. We are grateful to Burundi's partners for their steadfast support, and urge the international community to stay engaged and help ensure that the country remains firmly set on its path to sustainable development and lasting peace consolidation.

In that regard, work has also continued to advance in the more area of peacebuilding in Burundi. The implementation of the reintegration programmes for war-affected populations, funded by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), is expected to be completed before the end of the year. Efforts to plan for a possible third tranche of PBF funding for Burundi have begun. In his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Paul Seger visited Burundi from 21 to 28 June. Allow me once again to commend Ambassador Seger for his leadership and tireless work to promote lasting peace and development in Burundi. I have found in Paul a strong ally in our joint efforts to enable Burundi to achieve its own national strategic objectives for peace, development and reconciliation.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Special Envoy Mary Robinson for her exceptional work to advance peace and stability in the region. Burundi recently hosted a regional conference on women, security, peace and development, co-organized by Ms. Robinson's office, which led to the adoption of a regional action plan on resolution 1325 (2000), as well as to a renewed commitment to collaborate in the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. We look forward to seeing this encouraging process continue, and to supporting the Government of Burundi and other national stakeholders in their work on this important initiative.

(*spoke in French*)

In accordance with paragraph 13 of resolution 2090 (2013), of 13 February, the Secretary-General will soon inform members of the Council in greater detail about the implementation of BNUB's mandate based on the report to be provided to him by the strategic assessment mission, which he will deploy shortly. For its part, BNUB will tirelessly pursue its mission to support the peacebuilding process and to strengthen democratic institutions in Burundi.

In that respect, the preparation for the forthcoming 2015 elections, which are already giving rise to much debate and are the subject of intense preparations, deserve special attention. The holding of its next elections will sorely test the young Burundian democracy. The positive trends in the current political scene bode well for the success of that important event for the Burundian people and their history.

At the request of President Nkurunziza, the Secretary-General is preparing to deploy a mission during the third week of August to assess Burundi's electoral assistance needs. Carried out in the broader context of the multilateral reforms under way while effectively addressing the various issues that I have referred to, and with effective support for the country's efforts to improve growth and combat poverty, Burundi's democratic experience could be a foundation for building a nation that is more united, prosperous and confident in its future.

In recent months, I had the privilege to hold lengthy meetings with all senior Burundian officials, including with the Permanent Representative, who is here in the Chamber, on all the issues that I just mentioned. I was thus able to take good stock of the importance that the authorities attach to the task of modernizing their country.

I am grateful for the quality of the reception and the cooperation that I enjoyed in exercising my functions. That demonstrates the great respect that Burundi has for the United Nations, and for international cooperation in general. I also took the time to listen to other stakeholders in Burundian society — political parties, representatives of civil society, religious groups, women's organizations and youth groups. Everywhere I noticed a great deal of confidence in the future they want to build together patiently, jointly and with mutual respect.

Allow me to pay tribute to the members of the international community present in Burundi for their support to the country. I am also grateful to all my colleagues from BNUB and to the United Nations family in Burundi for their dedication.

I would like to conclude by referring to what an astute Burundian observer once solemnly told me, which was that his country continued to make progress despite the weight of history and the daily challenges. I found his words rich in meaning and hope — hope for a better tomorrow, forged from the hard work of Burundi's men and women. They will need the outstretched and reassuring hand of all their partners, and, undoubtedly, the continued engagement of the Security Council.

The President: I thank Mr. Onanga-Anyanga for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Seger.

Mr. Seger (*spoke in French*): A Burundian proverb says, "Even if there is no rooster to crow at dawn, the day will dawn." Undoubtedly, the day will dawn, but will people also wake up on time?

Peacebuilding in Burundi has made significant and impressive progress, but a critical point has also been reached that requires a higher level of commitment from both sides, the Government and the international community, to take the final steps. The rooster would therefore do well to continue crowing for some time more.

My briefing will focus on the following three points. First, I will summarize the results of my most recent visit to Burundi, from 24 to 28 June, which aimed to take stock of the situation in the country; discuss the follow-up to the Geneva Conference of Development Partners; and, address the issue of the next steps to be taken by the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). As I sent member States of the Council my full report by letter last week, I will simply give a brief summary of the peacebuilding situation. Following the excellent briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, I will be able to make my statement even more concise. Secondly, I will share the main messages and conclusions from my visit. And, lastly, I will make a pitch for extending the presence of the United Nations Office in Burundi (BNUB) beyond its current mandate, ideally until the 2015 elections.

Before I begin, let me first take this opportunity to offer my sincere thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, and his team at the United Nations Office in Burundi for their exemplary work and excellent cooperation with the Burundi configuration of the PBC. I would also like to thank the Government of Burundi for welcoming me warmly once again and for the spirit of trust and cooperation it has always displayed.

Last month I visited Bujumbura, where as usual, in close cooperation with BNUB, I met with senior representatives of the Government, including the

President of the Republic, the principal political parties, and interlocutors from civil society and the international community, including the international financial institutions. The main topics discussed were the political situation, particularly in the context of the 2015 elections, the socioeconomic situation, human rights, the issue of how to deal with the past, and the land issue. My impression confirms that of the Special Representative, which is that although the country has made significant progress, several challenges remain. I saw a real risk of a gap between the expectations of the Government on the one hand and those of the international community on the other. Moreover, the fragility of the Burundian economy requires urgent action.

As the Special Representative said, we are seeing positive developments but also problems at the political level. On the positive side, it should be noted that the two most recent workshops on elections promoted a democratic, transparent and open dialogue between the Government and the opposition, and prompted the return of several politicians from exile. By contrast, the recent enactment of a new press law, along with other bills currently being drafted — particularly those on non-profit associations and public demonstrations — has drawn a lot of criticism. Some rather vague provisions in these pieces of legislation are thought to be potentially harmful to peacebuilding. The same applies to the Imbonerakure, the youth wing of the governing party, the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie. The Special Representative also mentioned this point, which was indicated to me across the board as an issue in need of greater attention. It seems that these young party members sometimes take over the role of State security institutions and resort to intimidation methods and threats against the population and members of other political parties. And various people I spoke to mentioned the risk that the other political parties might also mobilize their own youth members. That is why programmes targeting young people, particularly job-creation programmes, should be given more weight.

The political situation is thus a difficult one, and the same goes for the financial situation, which continues to deteriorate. As the Special Representative said, the results of the Geneva Conference of Development Partners must be implemented, particularly since the time is ripe to take bold, major measures. In order to do that, new energy is needed on the part of the Government, particularly in the area of good governance. It is also important that the Geneva spirit of mutual commitment be maintained by both the Government and the international community. I am, incidentally, looking forward to participating at the end of October in the second sectoral conference, which will deal with the challenges of peacebuilding in Burundi, among other issues.

The Special Representative mentioned the process of dealing with the past, and I will simply refer the Council to his discussion of the issue. He also discussed the handling of the land question by the Commission nationale des terres et autres biens (CNTB), which has recently shaken up public life in Burundi. As the Council is aware, most of those cases date from the tragic events of 1972, when a large part of the population, mostly Hutus, were forcibly evicted from their land. I have learned that the various stakeholders have differing opinions on how the President of the CNTB has dealt with this complex and politically sensitive question. The controversy has chiefly to do with the notion of purchasing in good faith. The President of the Commission, minimizing the number of cases of landowners who acquired their land unaware of its illegal origins, favours reconciliation through restitution. Given the importance of landownership in Burundi and its potential ethnic repercussions, this issue is very relevant to peacebuilding and deserves our attention. I have specifically informed the authorities that the Burundi configuration of the PBC is ready to facilitate the establishment of a compensation fund, should the Government so desire.

I left Bujumbura with mixed feelings. The country has made impressive progress, but what is needed is to maintain the momentum that has prevailed since the Geneva Conference. I realize that the peacebuilding process is arduous and requires perseverance. Every marathon runner knows that the last 10 kilometres are always the hardest. Like the Special Representative, I therefore encourage the Government to stay the course, given that the country has made so much progress towards stabilization in recent years.

My message to the Burundian Government is that it should display political leadership and redouble its efforts to tackle major reforms in the areas of good political and economic governance and the rule of law. In particular, I encourage the authorities to translate the consensus of the two political workshops into improving the electoral code, to employ a liberal

interpretation of the new press law while respecting freedom of expression, to ensure that other legislation complies with international standards, to implement the poverty reduction strategy paper in accordance with the commitments made in Geneva and to implement the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund for improving the country's fiscal situation.

At the same time, my message to the international community is to step up its commitment to Burundi and to maintain constructive, open and forthright communication with the Government. We should closely monitor the implementation of the press law and the drafting of other bills; continue to support Burundi in the spirit of our mutual commitments and in compliance with the pledges made in Geneva; follow developments relating to the land issue and support the Government's efforts to establish a framework for dealing with the past, based on the will of the Burundian people. In any event, the PBC will remain engaged in all these areas.

My role as an advocate for Burundi depends largely on the presence of BNUB and especially on the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga. Their untiring work, day after day, for the good of Burundi is essential. I am aware that BNUB's mandate will not be under discussion for another six months, when we will also have the results of the strategic assessment mission, but I know already that I would strongly recommend BNUB's continued presence at least until the 2015 elections. I have also said as much to the authorities in Bujumbura. That personal conviction, which I expressed the last time I spoke here (see S/PV.6909), was further strengthened by the impressions produced on my last visit to Burundi. We have not yet reached a point when we can disengage.

In three days, the Security Council will discuss the situation in the Great Lakes. It goes without saying that the security situation in the region influences the situation in Burundi and vice versa. The regional dimension is one more reason why the international community and the United Nations in particular should continue its engagement in Burundi. With a peaceful, secure and prosperous Burundi, the Council will not have to worry about yet another situation in that volatile region.

I will conclude my remarks by calling on the representatives of the members of the Security Council to keep Burundi in mind during their discussions next Thursday. Burundians very much deserve a prosperous future.

The President: I thank Mr. Seger for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

Mr. Niyonzima (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): I should like, on behalf of the Government of Burundi and on my own behalf, to convey the warm thanks of His Excellency Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic, and the entire Burundian people to the Security Council and the international community for the broad range of support that we have enjoyed in our struggle to put our country back on the track of peace and stability.

Not long ago, Belgium had been without a Government for over a year. Despite the absence of governmental authority, peace and security prevailed and the Belgians continued to go about their business as if nothing had happened. In Burundi, like in many poor countries, a 24-hour power vacuum may be enough to spawn criminal acts ranging from simple acts of vengence to inter-community confrontation.

If peace and security prevailed in Belgium in the absence of a Government, it is not because Belgians are naturally more inclined to come together in fellowship. Burundians are equally so inclined. That is an inherent part of human nature. The explanation is simply that the Belgians are free from worries of subsistence; they have enough to eat, to keep themselves warm and to dress themselves. They have access to health care. They have access to drinking water. Burundi does not have the minimum necessary to sustain life; it lives below the poverty line.

The example of Belgium is sufficient to show that the quality of governance is not a factor in ensuring peace and security. Without the bare minimum for subsistence, everything we do and everything we say is irrelevant. The French say that a hungry stomach has no ears. Let us discuss the good governance that is so dear to Burundi's many partners, because it is not an empty word in Burundi and is central to all Government action.

Since the beginning of the implementation of the peacebuilding programme in Burundi in 2007, significant progress has been registered in almost all socioeconomic and political areas, including peace and security, the disarmament of the civilian population, the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants,

the repatriation and resettlement of refugees, good political and economic governance, the strengthening of the rule of law and justice, the promotion of human rights, national reconciliation and the fight against impunity. Significant progress has been made in particular within the new defence and security forces, whose efficiency and professionalism have been placed at the service of other countries in difficulty, such as Somalia, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Darfur, and soon Mali.

In the political field, significant progress has been seen in the consolidation of democracy and the resolution of political disputes through dialogue. It is in this context that, with the assistance of the United Nations Office in Burundi, workshops were recently held for Burundian political actors, including those who were previously in exile, aimed at strengthening institutional capacity. These meetings gave participants the opportunity to engage in consensual and constructive debate on the arrangements for establishing the electoral code and a road map that will lead to the very smooth holding of elections in 2015.

The press law and the work of the Commission des terres et autres bien endured negative media coverage, but the Government is determined to continue its efforts to promote justice, equality and peace. The achievements of the Government are many and well known to the international community, which has heaped continual praise on the Government and cited Burundi as an example of successful peacebuilding.

In recognition of our efforts, the international community has pledged financial support to Burundi totaling $2.6 billion in funding for the strategic framework for the fight against poverty. Unfortunately, this support has been slow in coming, and extreme poverty has begun to create tensions in Burundi. With only 46 per cent of pledged support yet to be delivered, our partners have responded not with checks but by signing disbursement agreements with the Government.

In Burundi, poverty has become so dire that life has lost the meaning embodied in certain values, such as work and participation in the building of society. Living has become synonymous with not dying, and each passing day becomes a victory over hunger and death. The spring is too tightly wound.

The Government has made great efforts, but it is exhausted and drained of the creativity and the inspiration for making pronouncements that unite and stabilize. Yesterday it was the doctors and medical personnel who were on strike; today it is the teachers; and tomorrow, it may be the police and the army. And if the people do not follow the movement, despite the numerous appeals made by union leaders, it is neither because they are angels nor because of the creative genius of the political class. It is merely because of the contrast between the suffering caused by hunger and that imposed by 40 years of military dictatorships. Yes, we trust in the patience of the population, but for how long? How long will it take hunger and poverty to become the norms in Burundi?

Poverty in Burundi has become a security issue. The Government asks that the Security Council treat it as such, and quickly. Specifically, the Government asks the Council to intercede on behalf of Burundi so that the promises made to the people of Burundi at Geneva are realized. For its part, the Government of Burundi reiterates its commitment to pursuing the reforms under way to rebuild and develop the country in order to achieve the well-being that the Burundian people deserve.

I should like to conclude my statement by sincerely thanking Special Representative of the Secretary General Parfait Onanga-Anyanga and Ambassador Paul Seger, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their advocacy work on behalf of Burundi. I ask that they continue their tireless efforts. The road ahead may be long and arduous, but it will one day come to an end.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.